



# **Department of Commerce Safety Report**

**January 2003**

# **Safety Report January 2003**

## **Introduction**

This report provides an update to Department of Commerce (DOC) managers and employees on the progress of Departmental safety initiatives and information regarding important Department-wide safety issues for January 2003. The report also contains the latest available accident data for the Department. Section One of the report, Program Initiatives, provides updates on the safety initiatives outlined in the Safety Program Plan available at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/safetyprogram/safety.htm>. Section Two, Significant Safety Issues, outlines safety issues and concerns which arose in January 2003. Section Three, Injury Statistics, provides statistics regarding Department injuries, as reported to the Workers' Compensation Program for December 2002, and an analysis of the data to assist bureaus in focusing their safety efforts. Section Four, Survey Results, provides the January results from the on-line survey available through the intranet Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Program Web Site.

## **Section One: Program Initiatives**

***Safety and Health Council Meeting:*** The Commerce Safety Council held their quarterly meeting on January 16, 2003. Key topics included the Fiscal Year (FY) 2002 accomplishments and FY 2003 Action Plan, the full inspection of the Herbert C. Hoover Building (HCHB), the Senior Executive Service Training Module, and activities of the various workgroups. The meeting also included an excellent presentation by Ms. Carolyn Cumberland, Bureau of the Census, concerning many of the safety issues, initiatives and activities at Census.

### ***Safety Inspections at HCHB and Silver Spring***

Comprehensive safety and health inspections are planned for HCHB and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Silver Spring Metro Center. The inspections are scheduled for March 3-7, 2003, and are being coordinated by the Commerce Office of Occupational Safety and Health and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) Environmental Compliance and Safety Division. Inspections will be performed of *all* work spaces in the buildings, including offices, where inspectors will look for cords stretched across aisles, torn carpeting, overloaded electrical circuits, and other problems.

To ensure the inspections are conducted in an orderly and efficient manner, a point of contact will be needed from each operating unit. The contact will accompany the inspection team, provide information about office operations, and access to areas occupied by their Unit. A memorandum will be sent to the head of each operating unit, providing additional details about the inspection.

## **Section Two: Significant Safety Issues**

***Seat Belts:*** Employees on official Federal government business are required to wear seat belts while riding in a vehicle, whether driving or as a passenger. That requirement went into effect in April 1997, with the issuance of Executive Order 13043, Increasing Seat Belt Use In the United States. A recent study of accident statistics within the Commerce Department revealed that in the last eleven fatal auto accidents, none of the victims were wearing seat belts. All states also require the use of seat belts, so using them is not discretionary.

Supervisors must remind their employees to use seat belts and take action when employees fail to use them.

### ***Slip and Fall Accidents:***

While many people regard offices as relatively safe workplaces, most of the slip and fall accidents that occur within the Department take place in office buildings. Many of those accidents can be prevented by following some basic safety precautions.

- Use signs to properly mark wet floors.
- Clean up spills promptly.
- Never place wires across an aisle where people walk.
- Be sure carpeting is in good condition, with no tears or bulges.
- Avoid storing items in hallways and other main thoroughfares.
- Never store materials in a stairwell.
- When carrying items down a stairwell, be sure one hand is always free.
- Inspect work areas routinely for tripping hazards.

## **Section Three: Injury Statistics and Analysis**

This section provides information on the total number of Departmental injuries for the past five years, and analyzes the types of injuries across the Department. The information below reflects December 2002 statistics. Due to late submissions, processing limitations, and to ensure the accuracy of the information, this section will continue to include information up to the previous month. The data presented in the charts and tables are based upon Departmental Workers' Compensation Program records.

**Incidence Rate:** The incidence rate (IR) represents the number of injuries and illnesses per 100 full-time workers and is calculated as follows:

$$IR = \frac{N}{EH} (200,000)$$

N	=	Number of injuries and illnesses
EH	=	Total hours worked by all employees during the year <sup>1</sup>
200,000	=	Base for 100 equivalent full-time workers (40 hours per week, 50 weeks per year)

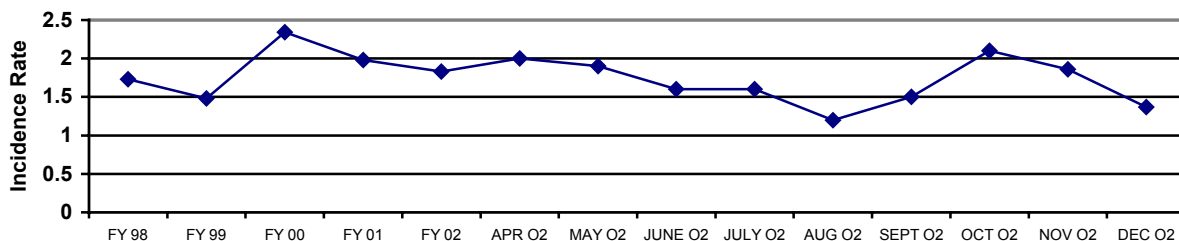
<sup>1</sup> The total hours worked were determined based on the total number of employees and the average hours.

The Commerce Workers' Compensation Program keeps records on all injury and illness claims, including those that did not include any lost work time. An accounting of all incidents allows follow-up and more comprehensive program review by safety representatives. However, the incident rates from those records are not directly comparable to industry trends, since they include many minor injuries and illnesses that are not considered "work-related" under Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) standards for private industry. An OSHA recordable incident is a work-related injury or illness that resulted in one or more of the following: medical treatment beyond first aid, a significant injury or illness diagnosed by a physician or other licensed health care professional, days away from work, restricted work or transfer to another job, loss of consciousness, or death.

For comparative purposes, table 1A, included as page nine of this report, provides data that more closely correspond to the recordable injury criteria. The remaining tables and charts include data for all cases submitted to the Workers' Compensation Program.

**Chart 1**

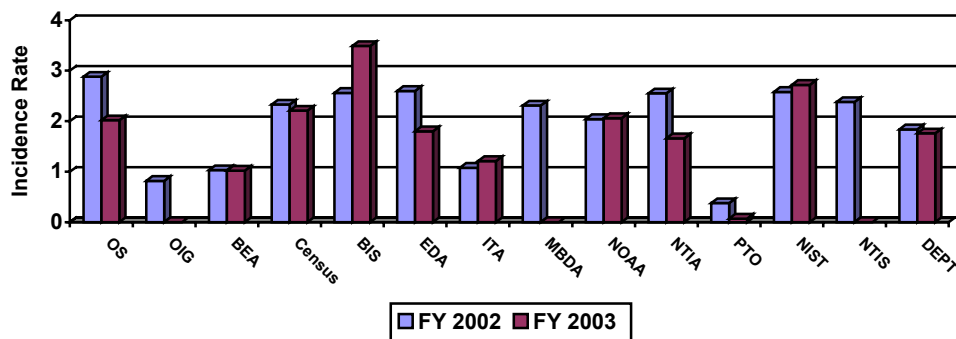
**Total Case Incidence Rate Trend**



Major Findings include:

- **The FY 2003 Total Case Incidence Rate (TCIR) for Commerce is down from FY 2002 and FY 2001.** The TCIR is 1.75 for FY 2003, 1.84 for FY 2002, and 1.98 for FY 2001. The incident rate of 1.37 for December 2002 was down from the previous three months (see chart 1 above), but equivalent to the December 2001 incident rate of 1.39. A total of 149 Workers' Compensation claims were submitted thus far for FY 2003.
- **Of the larger bureaus, the TCIRs for FY 2003 are equivalent to or lower than the rates for FY 2002 (see table 1 and chart 2).** The TCIR for NIST is slightly higher, five percent, than last year. NIST had five injuries reported for the month of December and seven for the month of November. The TCIR for ITA is 12 percent higher than FY 2002. However, ITA did not have any reported injuries during December. As a result, the FY 2003 TCIR for ITA decreased significantly from November.

Chart 2



- **Of the smaller bureaus (i.e., bureaus with less than 500 employees), the Bureau of Industry and Security (BIS) and the Technology Administration (not shown) have higher TCIRs for FY 2003 when compared to FY 2002.** Three BIS employees were injured in FY 2003. One BIS employee was injured during training at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center, and two employees were injured in automobile accidents. The Technology Administration (TA) did not have a single injury from FY 1998 to FY 2002. One TA employee was injured in October 2002, resulting in a current injury rate of 9.88.
- **The Total Reported Case Incidence Rate (TRCIR) for Commerce is down from previous years.** The TRCIRs for Commerce are 1.46 for FY 2003, 1.60 in FY 2002, and 1.72 in FY 2001.

**Types of Injuries:** Many of the injuries reported can be prevented through improved safety awareness and proper maintenance. A Departmental and bureau focus on eliminating injuries and illnesses is essential. Eliminating injuries and illnesses can be accomplished by evaluating the types of claims submitted and structuring safety awareness training programs to eliminate accidents. Information on types of injuries is provided in charts 4 and 5, and tables 2 and 2A.

Key findings are explained below:

- **“Slips/Falls” continue to be the most prevalent type of injury.** “Slips/falls” accounted for 36 percent of all injuries within the Department for FY 2002 and for 38 percent in December 2002. More attention must be given to walking surfaces to reduce injuries from slips and falls. Floors that are wet from mopping must have highly visible warning signs, so employees know to avoid those areas. Trips from cords strung across floors continue to cause injuries. Telephone lines, electrical cords, and other cords should also be routed away from walking areas.
- **“Struck and Contact” injuries were second in frequency for December 2002.** These injuries combined for 21 percent of those reported for FY 2002, and 32 percent for December 2002. A majority of the injuries were caused when employees struck open drawers, doors, or low overhead clearances. Those injuries can be avoided by closing drawers that are not being used. Employees should also be aware of their surroundings and use caution. Low overhead clearances should be marked with highly visible paint or tape.
- **“Exertion” injuries remain a concern.** “Exertion” injuries were 20 percent and 18 percent of total injuries for FY 2002 and December, respectively. To prevent back injuries, employees should use carts to move objects, and avoid carrying them by hand. The proper lifting technique includes keeping the back straight and lifting with the legs. For jobs that require repetitive motion, an ergonomics assessment should be conducted.
- **“Exposures” were evident as well.** Exposures accounted for five percent of the injuries or illnesses reported in FY 2002. However, no exposure illnesses were reported in December. Most exposure illnesses can be prevented through proper ventilation and use of personal protective equipment.

**Chart 4**  
**Injury Type As Percentage of Total Injuries for**  
**FY 2002**

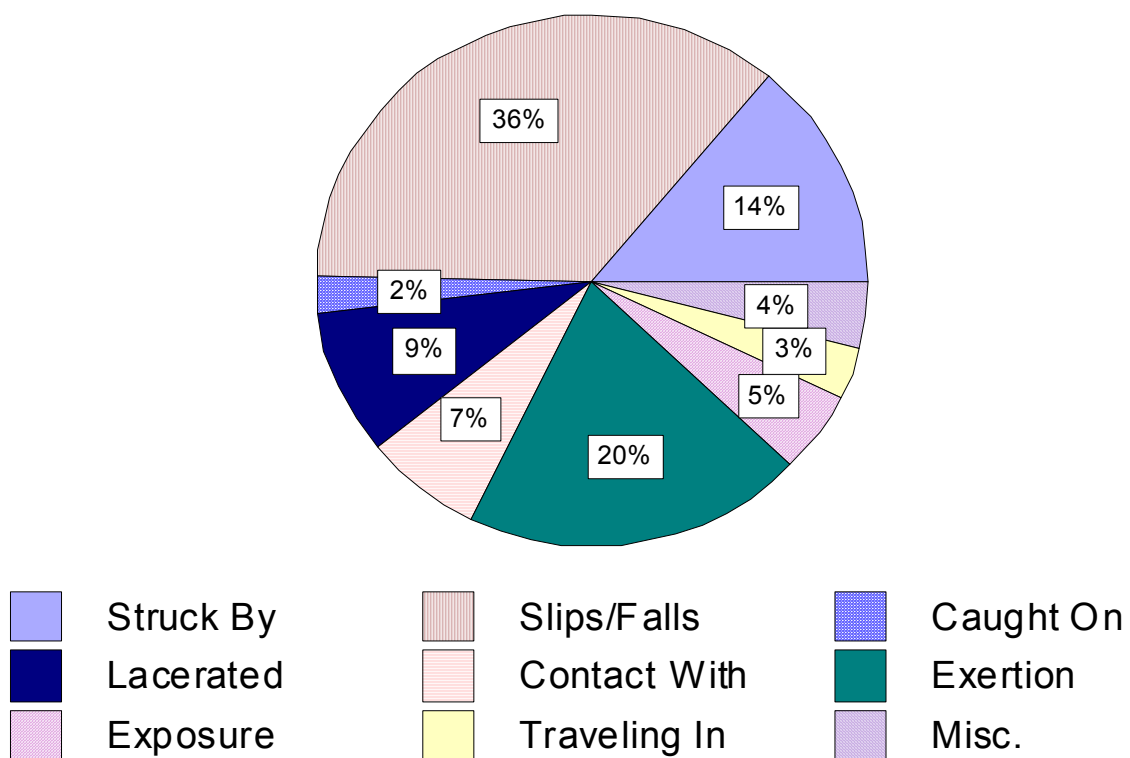
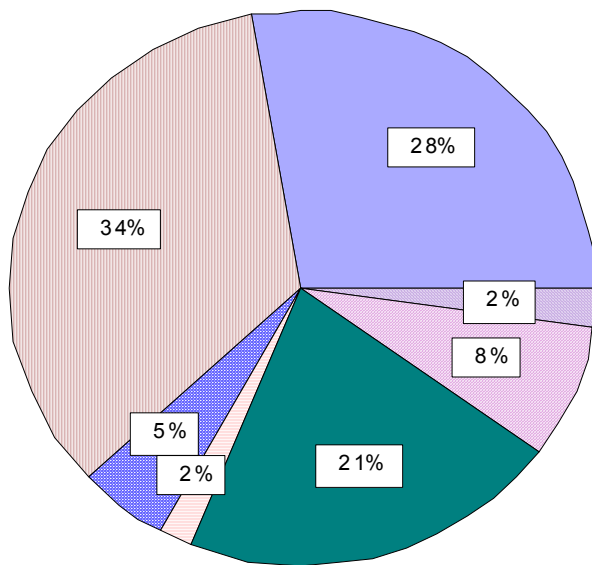


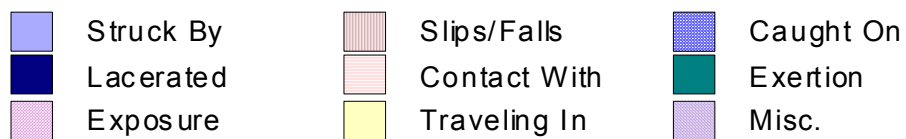
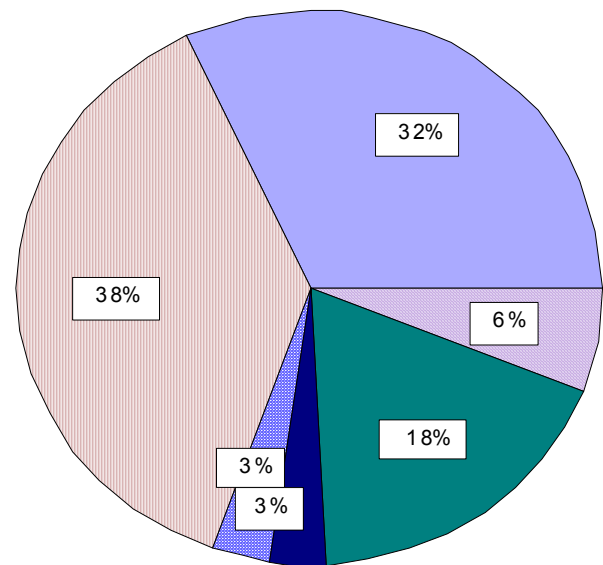
Chart 5

## Injury Type As Percentage Of Total Injuries

NOVEMBER



DECEMBER





**TABLE 1**  
**TOTAL CASE INCIDENCE RATE**

Bureau	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		November 2002		December 2002		FY 2003 (To Date)	
	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.38	19	2.20*	35	3.94	22	2.47	23	2.88	1	1.52	0	0	4	2.02
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	2	1.32	4	2.98	3	2.15	1	0.82	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bureau of Economic Analysis	8	1.75	4	0.88	1	0.23	5	1.12	4	1.03	1	3.06	0	0	1	1.02
Bureau of the Census	282	1.34	311	1.04	383	2.83	393	2.41	241	2.33	21	2.58	12	1.48	54	2.21
Bureau of Industry and Security	10	3.02	11	3.08	15	4.06	9	2.44	9	2.56	2	7.04	1	3.49	3	3.49
Economic Development Administration	4	1.72	9	3.67	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	1	5.35	0	0	1	1.80
International Trade Administration	26	1.33	18	0.92	24	1.23	12	0.62	18	1.08	3	2.18	0	0	5	1.21
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.13	1	1.10	3	3.40	4	4.36	2	2.31	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	280	2.52	317	2.78	307	2.69	247	2.18	228	2.04	14	1.50	21	2.24	58	2.06
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.22	2	0.88	2	0.87	7	3.03	6	2.55	1	4.96	0	0	1	1.66
Patent and Trademark Office	38	0.73	27	0.47	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	1	0.20	0	0	1	0.07
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	9.88
National Institute of Standards and Technology	105	3.57	84	2.87	79	2.82	68	2.34	76	2.58	7	2.85	5	2.04	20	2.72
National Technical Information Service	2	0.66	6	2.61	4	2.15	1	0.52	4	2.38	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>778</b>	<b>1.73</b>	<b>811</b>	<b>1.48</b>	<b>890</b>	<b>2.34</b>	<b>807</b>	<b>1.98</b>	<b>642</b>	<b>1.84</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>1.86</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>1.37</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>1.75</b>
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

\* Total Case Incidence Rate includes all cases reported to the Workers' Compensation Program.

\*\* Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Case Incidence Rate.

**TABLE 1A  
REPORTED CASE INCIDENCE RATE\***

	FY1998		FY 1999		FY 2000		FY 2001		FY2002		November 2002		December 2002		FY 2003 (To Date)	
	Actual															
Bureau	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate	No.	Rate
Office of the Secretary	17	2.38	19	2.20*	30	3.38	17	1.91	22	2.75	1	1.52	0	0	4	2.02
Office of Inspector General	2	1.22	1	0.66	3	2.24	3	2.15	1	0.82	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bureau of Economic Analysis	7	1.53	4	0.88	0	0	5	1.12	3	0.77	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bureau of the Census	244	1.15	288	0.96	345	2.55	332	2.04	212	2.05	14	1.72	8	0.98	42	1.72
Bureau of Industry and Security	8	2.42	10	2.80	13	3.52	8	2.17	9	2.56	2	7.04	1	3.49	3	3.49
Economic Development Administration	4	1.72	8	3.26	4	1.69	5	2.08	6	2.60	0	0	0	0	0	0
International Trade Administration	24	1.23	17	0.86	22	1.13	11	0.57	10	0.60	3	2.18	0	0	5	1.21
Minority Business Development Agency	1	1.13	1	1.10	2	2.27	4	4.36	2	2.31	0	0	0	0	0	0
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration	260	2.34	275	2.41	289	2.53	225	1.98	203	1.81	13	1.39	19	2.03	54	1.92
National Telecommunications & Information Administration	3	1.22	2	0.88	2	0.87	5	2.16	3	1.27	2	9.99	0	0	2	3.32
Patent and Trademark Office	35	0.67	26	0.45	29	0.50	31	0.55	24	0.38	1	0.20	0	0	1	0.07
Technology Administration	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	9.88
National Institute of Standards and Technology	87	2.96	76	2.60	66	2.36	55	1.89	59	2.00	2	0.81	4	1.63	12	1.63
National Technical Information Service	2	0.66	5	2.18	4	2.15	1	0.52	3	1.78	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>694</b>	<b>1.54</b>	<b>732</b>	<b>1.34</b>	<b>809</b>	<b>2.13</b>	<b>702</b>	<b>1.72</b>	<b>557</b>	<b>1.60</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>1.34</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>1.12</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>1.46</b>
Decennial Census 2000	182	3.4	890	11.3	4798	6.7	32	13.3								

\* The Total Reported Case Incidence Rate includes only those injuries or illnesses that are reportable to OSHA under 29 Code of Federal Regulations, Part 1904.

\*\* Population fluctuations can have a serious positive or negative impact on the Total Reported Case Incidence Rate.

**Table 2**

**INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU  
AGENCIES WITH MORE THAN 500 EMPLOYEES  
(Through December 2002)**

<b>BUREAU</b>	<b>NOAA</b>			<b>CENSUS</b>			<b>NIST</b>			<b>PTO</b>			<b>ITA</b>			<b>OS</b>			<b>TOTAL</b>
<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>03</b>	<b>01</b>	<b>02</b>	<b>03</b>	
Struck By/Against An Object	24	29	20	56	27	7	16	8	3	6	4	0	1	1	1	5	2	1	211
Falls/Slips	72	59	14	153	96	28	19	22	7	13	7	1	5	7	3	10	2	1	519
Caught On An Object	4	5	2	9	8	2	1	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	0	37
Cuts/Bites	20	26	2	36	19	2	12	9	0	2	2	0	1	0	0	0	2	0	133
Contact With An Object	13	19	0	24	11	1	1	6	0	6	6	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	92
Exertion/ Motion	64	64	16	54	37	10	7	17	4	3	2	0	1	2	0	3	1	2	287
Exposure To Chemicals/ Elements	13	9	2	7	6	2	3	3	3	0	1	0	1	6	1	0	12	0	69
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	4	10	0	10	16	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	43
Miscellaneous*	2	7	2	8	21	2	1	8	3	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	58
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>357</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1449</b>

\* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke.

\*\* Decennial Census claims were omitted to provide a clearer picture of injury trends

**Table 2A**

**INJURY TYPES BY BUREAU  
AGENCIES WITH LESS THAN 500 EMPLOYEES  
(Through December 2002)**

Bureau	OIG			ESA/BEA			EDA			TA			NTIS			NTIA			MBDA			BIS			Total
Fiscal Year	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	01	02	03	
Struck By/Against An Object	0	0	0	2	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	1	2	0	0	0	0	2	2	15
Falls/Slips	2	0	0	2	2	1	4	5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	3	0	3	1	0	6	0	0	33
Caught On An Object	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
Cuts/Bites	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Contact With An Object	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	6
Exertion/ Motion	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	2	2	2	10
Exposure to Chemicals/ Elements	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Traveling In Car/Metro/ Taxi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Miscellaneous*	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>73</b>

\* Miscellaneous includes injuries not covered in the standard OSHA types of injuries. These include twisting/bending injuries, emotional/psychological stress injuries, injuries which exacerbate a preexisting condition resulting in conditions such as heart attack, seizures, and stroke.

## Section Four: Survey Results

We continue to receive comments through the Safety Survey Web Site. We are using employee comments to help shape a safety program responsive to employee issues and concerns. The Web Site can be accessed through the Office of Human Resources Management Homepage at <http://ohrm.doc.gov/>.

During the month of January, we received 134 responses through the Web Site survey. The next Newsletter will provide details on some of the comments received and how we are addressing them. The Newsletter will be available on the OSH Program Web Site

### *Safety Survey Statistics*

The following tables provide some data regarding the distribution of responses by bureau and general geographical area, as well as general safety impressions.

#### Safety Survey August Results

Have you experienced a safety lapse in your work area during the past 3 months?		
Answer	Count	Percent
No	99	74%
Yes	32	24%
No Answer	3	2%

Have you noticed any safety improvements in your work area or in the Department as a whole during the past 3 months?		
Answer	Count	Percent
No	77	57%
Yes	53	40%
No Answer	4	3%

Geographical Location		
State	Count	Percent
AK	2	1.56%
AL	1	0.78%
CA	2	1.56%
CO	4	3.12%
DC	14	10.94%
FL	2	1.56%
HI	1	0.78%
ID	2	1.56%
IN	3	2.34%
KS	3	2.34%
MD	37	28.91%
MI	2	1.56%
MN	1	0.78%
MO	4	3.12%
NC	5	3.91%
ND	1	0.78%
NE	2	1.56%
NJ	2	1.56%
NY	4	3.12%
PA	2	1.56%
SC	1	0.78%
SD	1	0.78%
TX	2	1.56%
VA	24	18.75%
WA	8	6.25%

Bureau Breakdown		
Answer	Count	Percent
BIS	2	1.49%
CENSUS	27	20.15%
ITA	9	6.27%
NIST	5	3.73%
NOAA	64	47.76%
OS	5	3.73%
PTO	22	16.42%